

September 30, 2016 - Ian MacKaye founded Dischord Records in 1980 with the other three members of the band he played bass for in high school, the Teen Idles. Their original intention was to distribute a 7" from their recently defunct band. Later that year, MacKaye and Teen Idles drummer, Jeff Nelson formed the hardcore band, Minor Threat. After that group broke up in 1983, MacKaye went on to be a member of the short-lived band, Embrace, in 1985, and then in 1987 he formed Fugazi with Joe Lally, Brendan Canty, and Guy Picciotto. Fugazi toured the world and released records for the next 15 years before announcing an "indefinite hiatus." Since 2003, MacKaye has played with his wife, drummer Amy Farina, in the Evens, and continues working on new music. He is still running Dischord Records after 36 years of documenting music coming from the DC punk underground.



As told to Brandon Stosuy, 6399 words.

Tags: Music, Independence, Focus, Inspiration.

Ian MacKaye and Brandon Stosuy on independence, creativity, and The Creative Independent

NOTE: This is a section of a longer conversation between Ian MacKaye and Brandon Stosuy that took place at Kickstarter's Theater at 58 Kent Street in Greenpoint on August 24, 2016. It was not an interview. It was a conversation. It was also a free public event. After MacKaye and Stosuy talked, the audience asked questions. The tone throughout was lighthearted, the audience often breaking into laughter.

Ian: [looks out at audience] Thanks for coming out for the conversation. We were just discussing what we're going to talk about, and Brandon said he would like to talk about independence but I said, "Why don't we start with this?" And this is how we'd like to start: Can you please explain to me, what is The Creative Independent?

Brandon: Sure, I'll give context. Ian and I have been talking on and off for a couple of months about what The Creative Independent is. I've tried to explain it, and we've had discussions back and forth about what it is exactly. This is what it is in basic terms: The Creative Independent is a project. It's a website. It's also an event series, and it will eventually be printed things. But in the barest terms: It's a website that will update daily with an interview a day. It will cover music, books, film, visual art, dance. All kinds of things. To start out, we're relying entirely on written texts. We want this to be very scaled back.

I: Is there a thread to the interviews?

B: There is an overall thread. There's a thread about people making things, creating things, process. There's honestly too much on the internet. The question then is "Why make another website?" It's because I think there's too much of the wrong thing on the internet. It's an echo chamber. So something we're trying to do is to avoid talking to people about albums within an album cycle, for instance, or talking to a filmmaker pitching a new film. Anything where someone is trying to pitch us with a "new project." Because basically what you get with that is something that's useful for their PR campaign.

I: "I just went through a terrible divorce, and this is my divorce album," or whatever.

B: Right, so we're trying to step outside of that, and ask more about process and long-term strategies. For instance, I noticed Eileen Myles, the poet, uses Instagram a lot, and in a very unique way. So I asked her: "Is this useful to your writing?" We talked about that and how it affects her poetry and other writing. You know, let's think about the grand scope of a career, or a creative strategy, versus zeroing in on one release, or one dance piece, or whatever.

I: So, what's the thread? I understand the concept of creativity. What about the independent part? In other words, what is it you are looking for? What is it you're trying to focus in or hone in on? I mean are these just people you find interesting? Or is there some other aspect of this that you're serious about?

B: We're trying to find people who are independent thinkers. It doesn't necessarily mean they're an "independent artist," or "independent filmmaker." It's people who are thinking independently, and doing things that seem to stick to a specific, unique vision. People who are doing something singular, and who aren't just following the larger zeitgeist. Some of the first interviews we've done have been people who've been around for awhile. Just because it's easier to trace that thread in those cases—like, here's Philip Glass, and here's his whole body of work. We've interviewed some newer people, too. But, yeah,

people who have a very specific reason for what they're doing, and can articulate that in an interesting way. I've done interviews for so many years. I started a zine when I was 12, and I'm 43 now. I've done so many interviews where people don't know why they're doing what they're doing. Or they don't have much of a reason. I interviewed a lot of metal bands for many years. In that case it's like, "Well, it's because of Satan."

I: [laughs] Aw, c'mon, be fair.

B: I'm serious.

I: They really credited Satan?

B: Yeah, tons of pretend Satanists. Like, how do you practice Satanism in your everyday life? No response. So I would want to know, well if you're really Satanic...

I: Was it for a metal magazine?

B: I did a metal column on Pitchfork called Show No Mercy. So I'd interview a lot of metal bands, but eventually I found loopholes because I got tired of interviewing the bands. So I interviewed Brooks Headley, who's a chef that happened to be in a band with Mick Barr. I was like, "this is metal enough." I interviewed a guy who ran a book imprint that published metal-related books. I started finding ways around it.

I: I was saying to you earlier that I think of artists and musicians and filmmakers and writers as translators. This is something that I got to thinking about: "What the fuck are these people doing?" And I think of them as translators. In other words, that somebody hears something and they are trying to explain to other people, using that medium, what is it that they are hearing. Visual artists see something, they see the world in a way and then they are trying to show people what it is that they're seeing. It's literally a translation. That was really helpful for me in terms of meeting people who I felt like, "well this person is interesting to me because the reason they are doing this is that they don't have a choice in the matter." And maybe that's what you're talking about. Like, I think that sometimes, whether or not they address it in satanic worship, or even people who are just like, "I wanna make money," sometimes there is nothing else for them to do. They have to do that. People say to me, "What is your favorite kind of music, what do you like to listen to?" And I always say, "my favorite kind of music is the music made by people who don't have a choice in the matter." So I can listen to anything... it could be punk or blues or whatever. I just want it to feel like the person who's making that music heard something and is saying, "this is what I'm hearing." It's the same way with any kind of visual stuff. I'm not particularly well educated about visual art, I don't have a degree in art history so just don't know a lot of that stuff, but occasionally I'll see something and in my mind, I'll be like, "Wow, something is going on here that it really compels me." And then if I read about it and find out that person saw something, they are like, "Here's what I saw! Here's what I fuckin saw!" That's what I want to feel when I look at things, that's what I want to feel when I hear things. That is a form of independence, right?

B: Yeah, definitely. A lot of the first people we've approached have an overall career arc, a history of doing things for long periods of time, and doing inspired work that existed outside of anything else. They were, and are, clearly listening to their own heads. What's exciting for me is that we're also still figuring it out. A lot of it is a gut thing; it's instinctual. As we go along, people keep coming to mind. Like, "I should talk to this guy who's a dancer who used to be in this punk band, I've seen him perform and it's an interesting thing he's doing."

I: Or like in our conversation the other day and I mentioned Nell Zink. (To audience.) Anybody ever read her books? She did one called *The Wallcreeper*, another book called *Mislaid*. She's really interesting and clearly on her own mission. So I guess to some degree when you talk to people they may offer up, "Oh you should talk to or you should check out this other person."

B: Yeah, we've had that for sure, people recommend somebody else. In fact, one of the things we've been trying to do is get each person to give us some recommendations, like, "hey what are some things that are important to you or who are some thinkers that are important to you?" Other times people have just offered someone up. I've have certain people who've been recommended a couple times by different people.

I: Was The Creative Independent an idea that you had? Or is this an idea you were invited to be a part of?

B: Yancey and I started talking about this a long time ago. We ran into each other at a coffee shop up the street and had a general conversation. As that point, the idea behind The Creative Independent was different than what it's become. It was broader. We kept honing in and then he asked, if you were to run a site what would it be? So I wrote up what my idea of what it would be; then I stripped that back some, and kept stripping it back.

I'm fairly sick of the internet. Recently I went to Wyoming to do an art project and I wasn't online at all. When I got back, I logged back onto the computer, and there was this shock of how loud everything seemed, and how chaotic Twitter seemed. Then within 12 hours I was right back into it. When I was removed from it I didn't miss it. With The Creative Independent, I wanted to make something that felt calmer, that maybe people would check if they were in a field in Wyoming.

So, yeah, instead of expanding, we keep subtracting. We ran into that already with this event, where people keep asking if we'll put it up as a video.

I: Right. One thing I've really noticed is that documentation has deeply interfered with the moment. And anyone who's recently seen a gig, it's so in evidence just by people filming stuff or whatever they are doing. I've done a lot of talks where people will record it but if you're being filmed then you realize "Oh, we are not just talking to the people in this room." I trust you all—I trust you all a little less *[points to people in the balcony]* because I can't see you *[people laugh]*. I don't mean that in a personal way, but it's true. Like, at Fugazi's gigs, we always liked having the lights on, because otherwise you're just playing to a weird vast black hole. Many bands or performers like that because they don't want to see people's faces. For me personally, I like to see who I'm playing to because then I have a sense of what's actually occurring. As opposed to this weird black pall, like a curtain. I like to know what is being exchanged. The problem with videotaping everything, or constantly documenting it, is that you don't know who you are talking to anymore. Or how it will be edited. Once I was telling a story and a guy in the story I was telling said "Jello Biafra is an asshole!" But somebody edited the video to where it was just me going, "Jello Biafra is an asshole!" *[audience laughs]* That's not what I said. I said it, but I didn't say it, you know? I started to realize I had to be more careful. The more careful you are, the more self-conscious you are about potential misinterpretations. Then, less can actually be communicated. That seems really straightforward. It's really ironic—a medium like the internet, which seems in some ways to be this very open and free thing, it is actually in many ways quite suffocating. There are times where, someone will say, "Oh, you should come up and play a song with me," or something, and part of me is like, well of course, that would be nice to play a song with somebody. But I don't really want it to be discussed. When you have an insatiable maw like the internet, which is just hungry for fucking content at all times, then it just becomes like, "No, I guess I'll just watch." Because I just don't want everything to be reportable. This is not a complaint, this is an observation. I'm just acknowledging my situation.

So when we talked about this I said, "Well, I'd be happy to talk about it, but I don't want to do a thing where it's livecast. It makes me uncomfortable. Also, I think there's way too much fucking chatter in the world at the moment. People just, "bleh blah bleh bleh blah." Even this *[gestures at auditorium]* seems a little weird to me. But, very nice of you to invite me up. It's a very nice building, very nice people here. *[laughter]*

B: Three or four years ago, Ian and I tried to do an Evens show. We talked about that like 10 times and nothing came of it. Then we talked about this. This actually came together, so this is good—we actually made it off the phone and into the same room. *[laughter]*

I: I say no a lot. *[audience laughs]*

B: I've never started a new website. There's this thing where people want to keep expanding. Whenever I talk to them about it, they say, "You should add this or add this." I think that's interesting. At this point, it's more worthwhile to say, "No, we aren't going to include that."

I: Are you concerned about having another new person weighing in every day? It could be like, in the movie, where you see the calendar pages whipping off, and by the time you get to February you forgot there was a January?

B: No, I feel like we're organizing each week carefully, so that people are playing off each other and there's an overall narrative. We've actually been designing it like a calendar, where each person has a day, and that whole day is their day. It's their holiday. You know, five a week may seem like a lot, but on the weekends we won't be doing that, we'll be doing something different. We'll also have multiple ways to search the interview archive. Maybe you're not interested in the person that particular day but you're like, "I want to find out about collaboration and multidisciplinary work" so you search the interviews by theme. Also, if you think about the amount of content on a standard website, this is so much less than that.

I: That's true.

B: You go to the site once, it's there all day, and it doesn't change that whole day. Even though that seems like a lot over a period of time, it's very slow in terms of internet speed.

I: Yeah, there's no question.

B: For 24 hours, it's just one thing there. I'm sure people will go, and keep refreshing it to see if something else is going to happen, and I'm like, "That's what it is, just the one thing." Also, we want to try to do something once a year, where we regroup and maybe do a publication, where we group the interviews together and print them out in some kind of published form.

I: Have you talked to anybody who you are just like, "Wow this person is fucked up, and I don't really want to have this interview"?

B: Not yet. In the past I've had those interviews. I interviewed Varg from Burzum and he was ridiculous. But no, not yet. I hope to. I hope to find someone who pushes it to that. But so far, no. There have been a lot of interesting conversations and things where we were like, "That was amazing!", but not in the sense that anyone has been crazy. Have you ever had anyone interview you who you thought was crazy?

I: Oh yeah. But not as crazy as me so... *[audience laughs]* Once when Fugazi was in Germany, we were being interviewed by this guy who I had met before when he stayed at Dischord house. At the time, the co-owner of Dischord, Jeff Nelson, was still living there. He's a really interesting and eccentric guy. Someone who I've known since high school and someone who I love. He collects everything you could imagine, anything

you could collect, he just loves collecting stuff. Along with his collections, he also always loved military stuff. So if you look at early punk photos, you'll see Jeff wearing weird looking military jackets. He has stuff from World War I and World War II, and he had Nazi stuff in there; but he's not like a Nazi guy, he's just a guy who is obsessed with that imagery from posters from that era. He also loves like Nabisco biscuit fuckin' posters from 1940. But this guy was interviewing Fugazi, and then he said, "So how can you explain the fact that you live with someone who collects Nazi memorabilia?" and I thought about it, because I was thinking, "You fucking stayed at our house as a guest, and you're pulling it out now in a way to try to..." I don't know what exactly the point was of it. But my response was, "Fuck YOU." I mean I fuckin' went off on this guy, because it seemed so inappropriate, this kind of question. Every once in awhile, people will try to go hard with me, but I'll go hard right back.

B: I recently reread the interview I did with you at Pitchfork in 2011. It was right when you were starting to put out the Fugazi archive, and I was thinking, every time I've dealt with you, it has been specifically through you. You call the Dischord house and it's your voice on the other line. I think that's pretty rare now. This is something I was talking to my wife about earlier today. There was this thing in the past few years where this whole, DIY-this, DIY-that, thing happened. I'd go to book a "DIY" band and they're like, "Yeah we'll put you in contact with our manager," and then manager pushes you over to the booking agent. And then they're like, "Alright, we'll put the PR people in touch with you next." So, in that sense, I think DIY can pretty quickly become an empty description.

I: Like "Independence." When you told me The Creative Independent, I'm like, "What? Why? Why that name?"

B: Yeah. We've been talking about that, too, like "Well, what does it mean to be creative and to be independent? What happens when you put those words together?" I think, in a way, it's a riddle that we're figuring out, which has been fun and interesting.

I: I feel like that begs the question. Because obviously it's not free to make a website, and you aren't working for free. So it's a sponsored operation—as evidenced by the fact that we are sitting here, right? And I'm not saying it's a bad thing but it's weird because there's this aspect of it being independent but it's not independent, right?

B: Well, Kickstarter is independent. I think if you're going to start something online now, you generally either sell ads, or you have someone funding it. Personally, I don't have the money to just spend like, "Oh, I'm gonna start a website." And Kickstarter is a positive, independent company.

I: I'm not critical of it. It's not a critical thing. I'm just saying it's interesting. When you first talked about it, you said "It's going to be called The Creative Independent." That leaves you wide open. Like, call it something else, you know, call it whatever. Just something that people don't go, "Well you're not being creative and you're not fuckin' independent, dude!" *[audience laughs]*

B: *[laughs]* That's when got the idea to invite you here. I was like, "You know, I'd rather invite Ian to come and talk to me about this than a 19 year-old on BrooklynVegan commenter who's writing from his mom's basement and saying "You're not independent man, I saw you walking into Kickstarter." I'd rather talk to you than that guy. *[laughter]*

I: It's just a paradox for me. I'm not critical about it, I think it's an interesting idea. I think the people you've mentioned interviewing, I'd like to talk to those people. I think they're interesting to hear about. I don't actually get an opportunity to sit down with people very often. You know I'm in Washington, DC, I don't bump into people. A lot of the people there are just going down to the Hill, or something, and we're in different worlds. They might be interesting. I don't know.

In my mind, what makes DC an unusual place is that the canopy there, the federal government—that whole world covers everything. But it provides a lot of shade. It's in the shadows, in the shade, where shit grows! The really serious, deep stuff can grow. I'm not saying, "DC is #1!" I'm just saying I like that aspect about it. I think a problem with New York and LA—I'm not beefing on you motherfuckers *[audience laughs]*—but part of the problem is that as soon as something grows, people pick it and try to figure out how to sell it. This is a challenge for everybody, this is part of the deal, a part of the arrangement. I think that in some way being in a location that is not instantly monetized, or commercialized, you get into these longer range ideas that really can take root.

Not to go way off topic, but this is something I find very interesting about when I first got involved in music: It was very regional. Because there wasn't a national radio station, you just didn't know. Everyone had to figure out what punk was for themselves wherever they were. You had places like Austin, TX, that are essentially getting the same information that we were in Washington, DC or people were getting in, say, Chicago, or Detroit. We were all getting the same basic information. But then we were trying to cobble together something on our own based on our realities. So you had these very different flavors for each place. And that is something I was really interested in when I first got into punk.

I loved meeting punks from other cities. I would just meet these people and by the early '80s we just knew these different scenes. They were so specific. I used to be able to tell where someone was from by the way they dressed. Like, "That's an LA guy," or whatever. Or the way they danced sometimes. There were these really distinct regional dances. I think because I grew up loving West Side Story, and all the gangs, the Jets and the Sharks and all these ideas. I loved that idea of people working with the same ingredients, but what they end up with is so tied into where they are or what they put together given their circumstances. That is a much more difficult thing to find at the moment.

I'm not talking about nostalgia, because I think right now is always now. People can still do stuff that is super profound. If you think about what was happening in American culture in 1979, 1980, when I first got into bands, do you think Fleetwood Mac was calling up people and booking shows for themselves? Fuck. No. Right? In a way, the problem is that people are appearing to be independent, appearing to be punk, or appearing to be Do-It-Yourself, and people are buying that stuff. But, really, they are just commercial bands. It's interesting, I was talking to a friend of mine who's in a band and she's trying to organize a tour. They are booking six months out and the booking agent she finally got to work with her said, "Oof we'll try, we usually like to work eight to 10 months out." What the fuck man? Who's thinking about booking eight to 10 months, that's a year from now? That seems really to benefit only the booking agent.

My point is not that I think booking agents are bad, I don't think that rock clubs are bad, I don't believe in evil, honestly. I just don't. I just think if one doesn't want to do it, one shouldn't do it, that's all. It seems so simple to me, like it's such a fucking simple concept. It's not like I'm on a highway and I'm like, "Fuck Exxon, or fuck all gas stations." At some point one has to make a decision about how one wants to navigate. And if I decide I don't want to deal with those things, I can just ride a bike. I'll get somewhere slower, or I won't even make it. But that's my decision. I think it's this concept that we have no choice but to accept these new things—that's the problem.

Maybe this is a good time to open things up for questions. Are there any questions from the audience?

Audience Member: Do you consider Dischord Records to be independent?

I: Yes, I do.

A: In what way?

I: We own it, we run it, we decide if we put records out, or we don't. And when. I guess the way I look at it independence is: I put things out or don't put them out, I play or don't play. When or how or where or why I want to. There's nobody really instructing me on what I have to do. So I guess that's my reason. I know that we own all the records, we have everything in the house, or the office. We're not beholden to anybody, we don't owe anybody money. I could stop it right now, we could just shut it down and no one could tell me not to, really. But I actually feel like, with a label, where I'm at now, is that I have a sense of custodial responsibility to the bands who have entrusted me with their music. But really the label decides. But if I didn't want to do it, I don't have to do it. How do you define independence?

A: No gods, no masters.

I: No gods, no masters.

A: Yeah making your own decisions without being beholden to an exterior force. But I mean you're always beholden to an exterior force...

Brandon, who unsuccessfully tried to find the Dischord house while on a trip to D.C. when he was 13, lists his 10 favorite Dischord Records albums (one album per band)

Fugazi: Repeater (1991)

Minor Threat: The Complete Discography(Compilation) (1990)

Rites of Spring: End on End (1985)

Shudder to Think: Funeral at the Movies (1991)

Lungfish: Sound in Time (1996)

Nation of Ulysses: Plays Pretty For Baby (1992)

Slant 6: Soda Pop*Rip Off (1994)

Hoover: The Lurid Traversals Of Route Seven (1995)

The Faith and Void: The Faith / Void (1982)

Autoclave: Autoclave (1991)

I: Well, that's the weather. Certainly. Okay, anybody have any questions? Yes ma'am?

A: So there's one thing that's been said over the course of this conversation that I don't totally agree with, which is that it is impossible to be totally independent on the internet. Given how the infrastructure of the internet and how the platforms we use to communicate are so at odds with the concept of independence, is something like The Creative Independent an opportunity to push back against that and open up some space on the internet that doesn't feel totally awful? Or do you think there is anything about the internet that excites you as a potential space for making something that's actually independent?

I: I think I must've miscommunicated. I certainly don't think I ever said that it's impossible to be independent on the internet.

Audience: Brandon said it.

I: You said that? [laughter]

B: [laughs] Yeah.

I: Oh, I don't agree with that.

B: I want to qualify it. It's not impossible to be independent on the internet. Not at all. But if you're going to launch a site, and pay a staff, it's much more difficult. If it's a hobby, it's easy. But I couldn't be like: "I'm going to start a website as my full-time job and I'm not going to pay the people that are working with me." I'd have to sell ads or come up with the money somehow. When I first started writing for zines, I wrote for a zine called Jersey Beat, that still exists. I wasn't paid, I did it because it was fun to do, and I felt like, "This is cool!" We're doing this zine that is like a New Jersey Maximumrocknroll. I didn't get paid to do it. But I also lived at home. I was a teenager. I could definitely have a 100% independent site if I didn't pay anyone. But if I'm going to find a way to actually pay the people contributing, I have to find money. Maybe it's advertising, or investors—or, less realistically, bake sales.

I do hope to push back on the rapid culture of the internet. I want to slow it down. We want to talk to people who are inspiring and interesting, who have interesting projects and are doing interesting things. I hope it makes a space for people who are feeling exhausted by the rest of the internet. Like, when I was saying I was in Wyoming I was just like, "God, I'm so happy to be away from having to be in front of a computer." I'd love it if The Creative Independent was a website where someone's in a field in Wyoming and they're like, "I want to see what's going on on The Creative Independent." You still want to check it out, even though you're in a field in Wyoming, looking at beautiful mountains. There are people who stop their car at a stop sign and take out their phone and they want to see what's going on, and people walk across the street and take out their phone while walking across the street. That's not my instinct. If I don't have to be on it, it's very easy for me to forget about it. I want a site for people who're in that space.

I: From my point of view, I certainly don't think it's impossible or that they are at odds. We've done a lot of touring over the years, and we've traveled around the world. I can't think of a single independent airline, or independent gas station. There are certain mechanisms and things where you have no choice. I remember when this guy wrote to me, because he was furious that he'd seen one of our records being distributed by a company that was a subsidiary of another company, which was a subsidiary of odious larger company. He was very critical of that. He said, "You're supposed to be independent; you're fucking working for these war machines," or whatever. And he said, "How do you defend yourself?" He emailed me. I said, "I just want to know what computer are you using, what computer did you use and what service provider were you using that you were able to avoid all these giant corporations?" There is a certain level of reality. It's not impossible to live entirely away from everything, but that's just a choice you make. Like when you walk on a street—you didn't build that street yourself. There's a certain level of this where you have to accept your environment. I'm not against the internet. I'm not saying like, "Oh it sucks, fuck the internet." That's not the way I feel about it. I just think it's an interesting challenge. Life for me is always navigation, just give me the weather and I'll decide how to dress that day. I think that's essentially how I've always dealt with things.

I look at it like when I was a kid. The rock scene seemed impenetrable. Completely impossible. I had no idea, especially coming from where I was coming from. But it didn't matter whether or not it was impenetrable, because I wasn't trying to penetrate it. I wanted an extended family. I wanted to do something. What I was not interested in was being told that I couldn't do it because I wasn't going to be able to penetrate it. I remember becoming a punk, and hearing, "You can't really be a punk in Washington, DC; you've got to move to New York." No offense to New York. [audience laughs] But this was actually something that was said to me... That's crazy, that is totally crazy to me. I was never interested in like, "Shut 'em all down, fuck the system," it was really like, "We want our own system and you can't stop us from building it." I think there's no shortage of examples of people who were using the medium of the internet that have done fascinating, brilliant, constructive, independent things. So I certainly don't think it's a medium that immediately disqualifies all independent thought.

I have thought, however, about web design. Because I was thinking about the concept of web design, and at the end of the day I think the tiny pixels are squares right? Does anybody know? Surely someone here must fucking know. The shape—is it a square?

All: Yes! It's a square.

I: So at the end of the day, there is a uniformity that is at odds with organic life. So, in a way, while there are some very attractive websites, they are all ugly. I don't mean that in a mean way. But it's weird. You work so hard on an album cover and you look at the picture and you're like, "It's beautiful," but then when it goes on the website, someone's website, all the websites, whatever, and it's in that little square, and it's being constructed of these little tinier squares and it just looks like every other album cover. It's just uniformity. That's just ugly. And again, it's just a dilemma. I think it's the same with digital audio. At the base of it there's squares. And there's something about that that is in conflict with organic life. But, what the fuck do I know, I'm just sitting up here.

B: Something you said to me on the phone and then earlier tonight, too, is the idea of Twitter and Facebook being gated communities. Can you talk about that a little?

I: Sure. We were talking about this gig, like how is it going to work. I ask a lot of questions, right? I said, "How do you get the word out?" Brandon said, "Oh, we'll post it on Facebook, Twitter, whatever." It should come to no surprise to you that I'm not a member of any social media team. [audience laughs] I see those sorts of things as gated communities. If you live inside, you get to swim in the pool. If you don't, you don't even fuckin' know there is a pool. Right? I'm not going to be lured in to go inside that gated community for convenience sake. That's a lure. It's a lure that I'm not comfortable with. I said, to Brandon "I don't want to do that." I said, "Can't you just email people?" Because if you email it, I might actually be able to be a part of this, too. I could come to this fuckin' thing. There's a group that does political events, and they had somebody that was, I think, a former Black Panther, come and speak in my town. I didn't hear about it at all. There were no flyers, nothing. I said, "Well, wow," and he said, "It was on Facebook," and I said, "Well, I don't live in Facebook, I don't live there." This was five years ago. It's gotten now to the point that it's so much worse where really significant, life changing, experiences occur where that if you are not on that side of the fence you don't hear about it. That is very troubling to me.

Now, I understand you could apply that to the computer too. I am accepting the computer as a baseline. It's like telephones. I can imagine people who don't have telephones who are like, "We didn't get the call... I don't have a phone you fucker!" [audience laughs] So, I'm accepting that. Email, fair enough, that's how we're going to communicate. But email did not necessarily require me to become a part of somebody's religion. Maybe someone could argue with me about that, but my sense was like, "Alright, at least anyone can do it." Any person that can get to a computer. Someone could wander into a library and get an email address. I suppose you can say the same thing about Facebook, but then you have to be part of their team. There's something fucked up going on here. But that's alright. That's the way it is. It's just the weather. It's troubling for me. I guess I don't go to parties I wouldn't have been invited to. So I wouldn't have been invited to this party.

Name

Ian MacKaye

Vocation

Musician, Label Owner

Fact

Ian MacKaye founded Dischord Records in 1980 with the other three members of the band he played bass for in high school, the Teen Idles. Their original intention was to distribute a 7" from their recently defunct band. Later that year, MacKaye and Teen Idles drummer, Jeff Nelson formed the hardcore band, Minor Threat. After that group broke up in 1983, MacKaye went on to be a member of the short-lived band, Embrace, in 1985, and then in 1987 he formed Fugazi with Joe Lally, Brendan Canty, and Guy Picciotto. Fugazi toured the world and released records for the next 15 years before announcing an "indefinite hiatus." Since 2003, MacKaye has played with his wife, drummer Amy Farina, in the Evens, and continues working on new music. He is still running Dischord Records after 36 years of documenting music coming from the DC punk underground.



Photo: Ebru Yildiz

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